DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 008 HE 014 628

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TITLE Residence Halls Unit Agreements: A Process for Developing Social Contracts and Moving Beyond Rules and Regulations.
PUB DATE Jul 81
NOTE 34p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Association of College and University Housing Officers (1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Standards; College Environment; College Housing; College Students; *Contracts; *Dormitories; Group Experience; Higher Education; *On Campus Students; *Resident Assistants; Student Behavior; Student College Relationship; Student Participation; *Student Responsibility; Student Role

ABSTRACT

Guidelines for establishing and implementing residence hall unit agreements with college students are presented, based on the experience of the University of Maryland, College Park. These agreements or social contracts are drawn up by a floor/unit of residents and are put in writing to define for that unit the acceptable range of behavior in a number of different categories. Details of the agreement are worked out by the floor residents through consensus, with support by the resident assistant and community staff. The agreement allows for: student assumption of responsibility in determining guidelines for living on their floor (e.g., quiet hours, parties, guests, cleanup); residents' discussion of desirable as well as undesirable behavior; and the role of resident assistants to be facilitators rather than rule enforcers. Six steps involved in staff training and preparation for carrying out unit agreements are outlined, and details of pre-agreement, agreement, and post-agreement activities are covered. The pre-agreement stage, which establishes the groundwork for the actual agreement negotiation, is considered in relation to specific activities as well as the ideas and materials that would be presented prior to the agreement negotiation. The agreement stage involves discussing and filling in agreement worksheets and the negotiation process, which will take place in three steps. In the post-agreement stage, provisions to renegotiate and amend the agreement are established. A letter to introduce the student to the concept of the unit agreement, worksheets, and a sample unit agreement are appended. (SW)

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RESIDENCE HALLS UNIT AGREEMENTS:

A Process for Developing Social Contracts And Moving Beyond Rules and Regulations

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July 1981

Modified for presentation at:
The M.A.A.C.U.H.O. (Mid-Atlantic Association of College and University Housing Officers) Conference

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HE 014 628

Forward

As student affairs professionals who work in residence halls we commonly refer to ourselves as being in the business of "student development" and "educative discipline." We want our staffs to be programmers, educators, counselors, and facilitators (among other things) - and more often than not they do a pretty good job of balancing these roles to the benefit of their student charges. But if we look closely we'll see an area that we haven't paid much attention to or been involved in to the extent we could be, and that area is simply: encouraging resident-students to take responsibility for their own living areas. That is, encouraging them to go "a step beyond" following the rules and regulations we've written for them - and develop their own guidelines, their own "social contracts", or as we call them - Unit Agreements.

Over the past year and a half at the University of Maryland, College Park, we've been trying to encourage residents to "go a step beyond" and develop Unit Agreements for their own living areas. After piloting the program in one of our five residence hall communities (each community houses about 1,500 residents) and testing it with our summer residents, we initiated the program on a campus-wide basis in the Fall of 1981. Preliminary results indicate that the Unit Agreement idea has been accepted by residents, and that it is a worthwhile venture. An extensive evaluation of the project is presently being undertaken and the data will be compiled early next year.

This booklet covers, in detail, "how we did it" at UM, College Park, but I think you'll find that it is written in such a way as to be applicable to a wide variety of campuses, including, I hope, yours. I encourage you to consider our idea for your residence hall system, and actively meet the challenge to help your resident-students take increased responsibility for their living environment.

Tom Scheuermann
November 4, 1981

For more information, write or call:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people have contributed significantly to this paper, through their ideas, materials, criticisms, and time:

Ron Slepitza, SES Office
Susan Kosempa, Cambridge Community
Roberta Coates, Denton Community
Beth Covert, Ellicott Community
Pixie Angelo, Ellicott Community
Courtney Sines, SES Office
Dot Vance, SES Office
Johnetta Hill, Cambridge Community
Drew Sweetak, Cambridge Community
Joe Krolak, Cambridge Community

Thanks to each of you, and to the RDs and numerous RAs who "pioneered" Unit Agreements and Social Contracts.

Title: UNIT AGREEMENTS

Description: Unit Agreements are agreements or "social contracts" drawn up by a floor/unit of residents. The agreements are put in writing and they generally and specifically define for that Unit the acceptable range of behavior in a number of different categories. Details of the agreements are worked out by the floor residents with "government by concensus" rather than "government by a simple majority", being the rule. Guidance encouragement and support are provided by the RA and Community Staff.

The process of negotiating, writing down, and renegotiating the agreements begins during the first weeks of fall semester, and continues throughout the year. There is an important assumption (supported by what we know of floors who have gone through the agreement process) that efforts to negotiate and renegotiate agreements through group/floor discussion are valuable per se, in addition to resulting in stronger, better-accepted agreements.

The purposes of drawing up Unit Agreement's include the following:

1. To provide residents with the opportunity to take on significant responsibilities in determining guidelines for living on their floor (e.g., quiet hours, lounge use, parties, intramurals, guests, bathroom use, clean up, etc.

2. To encourage resident's of the Unit to discuss desirable as well as undesirable behavior, and how positive behavior can be fostered while negative behavior is confronted and discouraged.

3. To move the RA and RD roles away from that of "rule enforcer" to that of "initiator", "facilitator", and "resource person".

Target Audience: A Residence hall floor or Unit, Note: Most of the specific agreement language may pertain to a "wing" or portion of the Unit whose members interact frequently -- perhaps a maximum of thirty to forty students.

Presentation Format:

Since the Unit Agreement will be an important step in setting the tone and direction of student behavior on the Unit, it should be carefully introduced, drawn up and renegotiated as necessary. It is not a "one shot" intervention; it is a complex but manageable process that will take place over the entire academic year.

Presentation of the Unit Agreement concept has already begun, through information distributed at recontracting time last spring, and through various summer mailings. New residents who participate in the "Sense of Community" weekend will be introduced to the idea during that program. Thus, by the time the semester begins, all residents should

have at least heard about Unit Agreements, and many will be curious about them -- we hope that they will be "primed" to discuss agreements during the first weeks of the fall semester.

The introduction, writing up, and renegotiation of the Unit Agreements will be coordinated (on each floor/unit) by the RA. Training, support, and assistance will be provided primarily by the RD; but the Community office (staff) will also be involved. Were the RA to "go in cold" and attempt to get his/her Unit to come up with a meaningful agreement, the likelihood of failure would be high. To assist the RA in effecting a successful agreement, the following would be provided before the beginning of the semester.

1. A community-based training program emphasizing:

   - Skills-building in the area of group discussion and facilitation
   - Skills-building in the area of [proactively] effecting positive "floormate" relations through discussing "what kind of floor/unit" residents want to make for themselves
   - Effective use of materials in the area of Unit Agreements (introductory letters/notes, worksheets, sample agreements, etc.)
   - Coordination of UA activities and programs within the hall and community, especially in the areas of assessment, planning, and support.

2. Unit Agreement Materials:

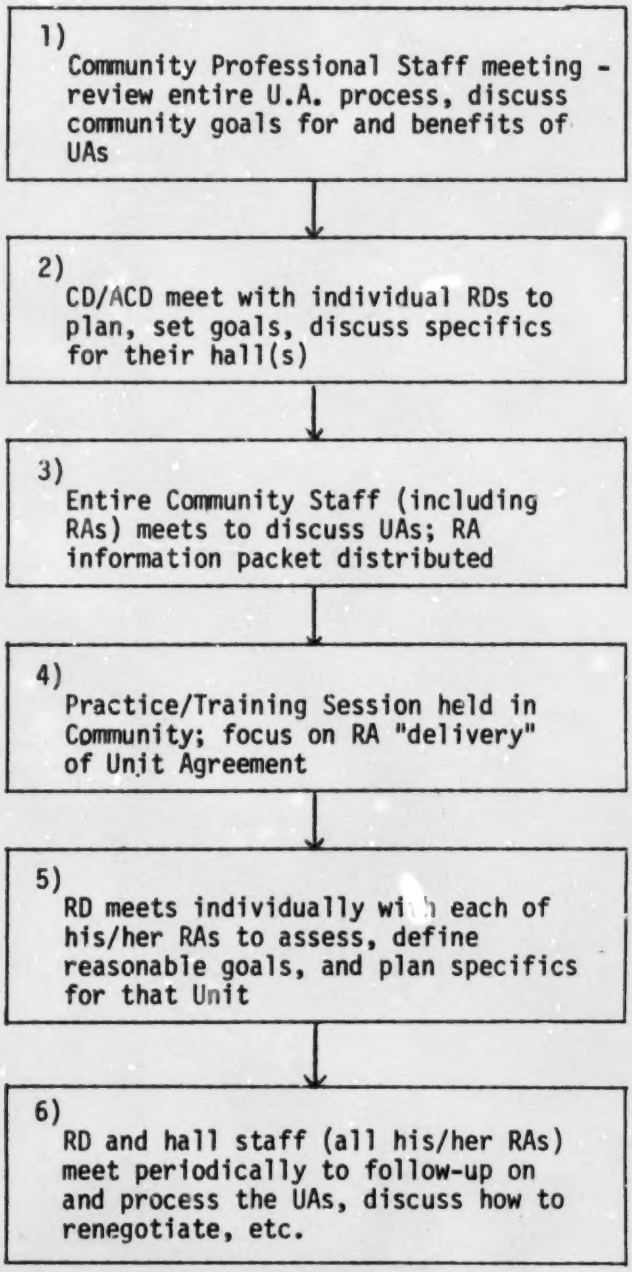
   - General Description and Introduction
   - Sample Introductory (Pre-Agreement) Meeting Outline
   - Worksheets
   - Sample Agreements
   - Agreement-Negotiation Meeting Outline
   - Agreement-Follow-up Procedures

A detailed description of training topics and suggestions is provided in the Pre-Agreement, Agreement, and Post-Agreement sections.

UNIT AGREEMENTS

Community Staff Training & Preparation

Below are listed the six steps suggested for community staff to prepare for and carry through successful Unit Agreements. Training would be under the direction of the CD/ACD, with the RA actually carrying out the agreement process and the RD acting in the roles of "support — person," "clarifier," and "trouble-shooter".


1) Community Professional Staff meeting - review entire U.A. process, discuss community goals for and benefits of UAs
2) CD/ACD meet with individual RDs to plan, set goals, discuss specifics for their hall(s)
3) Entire Community Staff (including RAs) meets to discuss UAs; RA information packet distributed
4) Practice/Training Session held in Community; focus on RA "delivery" of Unit Agreement
5) RD meets individually with each of his/her RAs to assess, define reasonable goals, and plan specifics for that Unit
6) RD and hall staff (all his/her RAs) meet periodically to follow-up on and process the UAs, discuss how to renegotiate, etc.

I. Pre-Agreement

After the staff preparation and training have taken place, work on the actual agreement process can begin. In order to prepare residents of a floor or unit for drawing up an agreement, the RA, with the support of the RD, must take steps to "lay the groundwork" -- before holding a floor/unit meeting to negotiate the agreement. Below are listed the pre-agreement steps and activities -- the "process", as well as the ideas and materials that would be presented prior to the UA negotiation -- the "content".

A. Assumptions (prior to meeting One, these will have occurred):

1. The residents who participated in New Resident Orientatiom have been given information on both roommate relations and Unit Agreements, and have had the opportunity to discuss these (this may be done during the unit/hall meeting times on Friday or Saturday of orientation).

2. Every resident on (the) unit has met their RA, and has had a copy of "Hallways" personally delivered to them by their RA.

3. The RA while delivering "Hallways" has "lobbied" for full attendance at the first floor/unit meeting, and has mentioned that a large part of that meeting will be devoted to discussion of what kind of floor environment residents want this year.

4. The RA has made a special effort to identify and briefly talk with the "informal leaders" on his/her unit (these people will later be involved in "selling" the UA concept).

5. Steps 1 through 5 on the "Community Staff Training and Preparation" guide are completed (step 6 may occur after meetings One, Two, or both).

B. Process

1. RA reviews general residence hall materials including materials on Unit Agreements (UA's).

2. RA prepares a written outline - introduction to residence hall living, and the UA concept in particular. This outline, to be used at the first floor meeting, may be prepared with the assistance of the RD, and/or in conjunction with other RA's.

3. RA holds the first floor/unit meeting to cover:

   - Welcome and Introductions
   - Residence hall living
   - Specifics of the hall and community
   - Discussion of the type of floor environment that residents want and are willing to work for
   - Introduction to UA's; explain worksheets
   - Set up second floor/unit meeting (meeting "Two") for approximately one week later

- - - - - - - - - - - End of Meeting One - - - - - - - - - - -

4. RA meets with "informal" unit leaders during the week between meetings one and two; to discuss UA's; and to assign these "leaders" responsibilities as well as secure their assistance.

5. RA and informal leaders publicize (personally and with signs, etc.) floor meeting "Two" during the week.

6. RA (and possibly the informal leaders) meet with the RD and other support persons, as necessary to prepare for meeting "Two".

C. Content (numbers correspond to "Process" steps)

1. RA will need to have a sufficient number of the following materials, and be able to explain them and answer questions that residents may have on them:

   - "HALLWAYS" A Residence Halls Handbook (distributed personally by RA before meeting "One")
   - Roommate Issues/Question sheet (for new residents at orientation)
   - Roommate quiz (for new residents at orientation)
   - Unit Agreement Worksheet

2,3. RA will prepare an outline of topics to be covered at the first floor meeting, for example:

   - Welcome, introduction of self and residents
   - Residence Hall living: talk about transition from home to residence halls, community atmosphere, intense nature of so many people living close to one another, diverse backgrounds of people - these must be respected, shared facilities, safety/security issues, residents' responsibilities in a community environment, role of staff, benefits of residence hall life, necessary rules.

*Note: Emphasize the positive, the "do's" rather than the "don'ts" at this meeting -- 90% of your residents will never violate a rule, so why cater to the 10% who may? This is not to say that rules should be passed over lightly, but don't emphasize them and set a negative tone!

- Specifics of the hall and community in which they live -- community staff, Area Council, lounges, rec. rooms, laundry, study rooms, phones, desks, ways to get involved, etc.

- Begin discussion on what type of floor residents want to have this year -- stress the fact that residents have a large stake and a large say as to what goes on in their unit. Solicit comments on: how the lounge is to be used, how fire/safety equipment is to be treated, appropriate noise level, how parties are planned, proper trash disposal, interaction with housekeeper, calling in work orders, handling roommate and floormate conflicts, etc.

  - RA should summarize his/her role on the floor and how residents' roles coincide with it (e.g. if you have a complaint about a fellow resident, confront him/her first and if you don't get anywhere then ask the RA for assistance).

  - Again, clearly explain to residents, and discuss with them, the importance of their taking responsibility for their living space -- and that, if they do so, their floor/unit can be a pleasant, clean, and even exciting place to live, study, relax, socialize, and recreate.

  *Note: This step will be effective to the degree that the RA can get residents to begin to think about, and talk about, what kind of floor/unit they want.

- Introduction to Unit Agreements: Should flow from the discussion on "what type of floor" the residents want. The UA may be introduced as a means for residents to take a good look at their floor/unit and determine for themselves such issues as: quiet hours; spending of floor funds; how to handle conflicts; lounge, bathroom, and phone use; who cleans up after parties; how the housekeeper will be treated; intramural sports participation, etc.

  Realistically there are some "givens", things that are non-negotiable such as proper use of fire/safety equipment, placing trash in proper receptacles, getting approval for painting hall murals, etc. However, as one can see from the list of issues above, residents do have a say in many areas.

- When the introductory discussion is over, pass out the UA "Worksheet". Go over the three areas (Givens, Negotiables, and Options) with the residents; ask them to spend some time thinking about them over the next few days and jotting down their ideas. Encourage residents to talk with each other about their reactions to the items on the worksheet.

- Indicate that you (RA and residents) will use the worksheet as a basis for coming up with an agreement for your floor/unit, and that since this will take some time, you'll begin work on it at a second meeting, next week. Let residents know that it is crucial that they attend the next meeting, so they'll be able to give their views on how they want the floor/unit to be. [If you think incentives will be necessary to get people there -- and they probably will be -- stress that this will be far more than a discussion about "floor rules". It will also be an initial discussion on how you want to spend floor funds, when/if you'll have parties, etc. As special incentives you may also want to indicate that there will be refreshments at the meeting, and/or signups for intramurals will also take place then.]

- Let floor members know that they'll be working largely with their own wing or section to draw up the UA, with representatives from the sections getting together to go over the use of public areas.

- It is also important for all residents to attend meeting "Two" to participate, as the agreement will be "binding" on all residents.

- Indicate that the agreement will be decided upon by consensus of the floor/unit members, and may be renegotiated as necessary.

*Note: RA's should guard against presenting the UA as something that "we have to do"; it must be put forth as positive and desirable for residents -- because it is! Residents will be quick to pick up on the RA's attitude, and the success of the UA may hinge on the RA's enthusiasm for, and belief in, the project.

*Note: The UA should not be presented as being highly formal (e.g. like a "homework assignment" or a general "pain in the ass"). It is structured, out of necessity -- what we want the residents of a floor/unit to do, as a whole group, is think about and talk about how they want their floor to be, rather than let a select few "leaders" determine that for them, in a haphazard manner.

- Set a date and time for meeting "Two", to be held approximately one week after meeting "One".

- - - - - - - - - - - End of Meeting One - - - - - - - - - - -

Between meetings One and Two:

4. RA meets with "informal leaders":* To discuss the UA process with them. It should be presented as a process which necessitates residents understanding and "buying into" it.

   - Let the "leaders" that you meet with know that you see their cooperation and support of UA's as important to their (the UA's) success. Ask for their ideas on how the UA idea might best be delivered to residents. Be certain to put forth the UA's in a positive light, something worthwhile, a chance for residents to take responsibilities that in previous years were given to staff members.

   - When the "leaders" have a good understanding of the agreement and its value, ask them if they'd be willing to support your presentation of it in meeting "Two", and to give the process a try, as opposed to conducting "business as usual" on the floor, i.e., letting things take shape haphazardly.

   - You may even want to ask one or more of the "leaders" if they would be a group leader or a wing/section representative during the agreement negotiation.

   *Note: You may want to meet with the "informal leaders" individually or in a small group, whichever you think would be more productive.

   *Note: If your meeting with one informal leader proves to be unproductive, don't worry or waste time on him or her - their help is important, but not essential, to the agreement process.

*Residents of your floor or unit who have a lot of influence on other residents, either positively or negatively. These persons generally are not the ones who hold "formal" positions in the residence halls (e.g. Area Council, RHA, floor president), but nonetheless are able to lead groups of residents, and generally "get them to do what they want."

5. RA and informal leaders publicize - personally and through written materials - floor meeting "Two": a number of different methods may be tried, including signs on RA's door, in bathroom, near elevators (if applicable); asking residents if they're planning on attending; asking some residents to bring refreshments (at least some popcorn!); sending out "minutes" from meeting One to each resident - include a summary of meeting One and a brief description of what will occur at meeting "Two". [Some RA's or informal leaders may want to use threats of violance to insure attendance, although this is not recommended.]

6. RA, and possible one or more of the floor residents may want to meet with the RD and other support persons, as necessary, to prepare for meeting Two: discuss how things went at the first meeting, how to get good attendance for meeting Two, review outline for meeting "Two" - decide whether any modifications are necessary, discuss how residents can be actively involved in the UA process - both at meeting Two and thereafter.

*Note: In the unit meetings, and between meetings One and Two, the agreements should be presented as guidelines "of, by, and for" the residents, so to speak. Residents will discuss and draw up the agreement, and perhaps most important -- they will be expected to enforce it. That is, when there is too much noise in the hall, the lounge is being used improperly, or there is trash in the stairwell -- the residents must let each other know that such behavior is inappropriate. IF THE RA IS THE ONLY PERSON ENFORCING THE AGREEMENT, IT WILL NOT WORK!

The RA may want to propose the following guidelines* for residents to use in confronting one another about such behavior:

1. Be polite, treat the other person with respect.
2. Do not accuse, rather - ask.
3. Address other residents directly and personably.
4. Take another resident with you if you're uncomfortable.
5. Use the Unit Agreement as a reference.
6. If the "violator" does not respond, call the RA.
7. Try to learn everyone's name and at least exchange "hellos", that way you'll be more likely to be confronting a friendly face.
8. Keep emotion out of your discussion and listen to the other person's perspective.
9. Use staff persons as a resource.

* from the Unit Agreement Worksheet developed by Susan Kosempa, Beth Covert, and Pixie Angelo.

II. Agreement

The groundwork for the actual agreement negotiation has now been well-laid, in Meeting One and in the week or so between Meeting One and Two. Now, in Meeting Two residents will meet to discuss and fill in the agreement "Worksheets" which they've had a week or more to review. The negotiation process will take place in three steps; moving from small groups of five or six residents through group leaders deciding on the guidelines for each wing/section, and finally to "wing representatives" meeting to agree on use of common areas. Meeting Two should be an exciting and dynamic time for the unit.

A. Assumptions (prior to Meeting Two, these will have occurred):

1. The Unit Agreement concept will have been introduced to all residents of the floor/unit; either in Meeting One or in the week following.

2. Substantial efforts were made to get full attendance at Meeting Two, including personal and written notification, providing refreshments and other incentives.

3. All unit residents have received, and understand the purpose of, the UA worksheets.

4. Unit "informal leaders" have been contacted by the RA, and their support has been secured

5. The RA has consulted with his/her RD, and other RAs on how to conduct Meeting Two.

6. The RA has drafted an outline of procedures and activities to be used at Meeting Two.

B. Process

1. RA holds meeting Two, to actually draw up the agreement.

2. Work on the UA is done one "wing" or section at a time, during the meeting.

3. The residents of each wing are divided into groups of five or six; each group chooses a spokesperson.

4. The small groups discuss and work out the details of the agreement, using the (previously-distributed) worksheet/outline.

5. RA calls a "huddle" with the spokespersons of the groups from one wing (at a time) to get a consensus on the "negotiable" and "optional" parts of the agreement.

6. When each wing has reached a consensus, a representative from each (section) meets to discuss rules for, and use of, common areas (e.g. lounge, kitchen).

7. The agreements for each wing and for the entire floor are put in writing by the representatives.

8. Have the floor/unit residents sign the agreement (this may be done at meeting Two, or a few days later, after the agreement has been typed.

----------End of meeting Two----------

C. Content (numbers correspond to "Process" steps)

1. The meeting should start in a large room (lounge), or in the hall if necessary. All unit members should be present as the RA introduces what will take place at meeting Two. The RA indicates that the bulk of the discussion will be in small groups (of five or six residents), and that at first, residents will be agreeing on what goes on on their wing alone. The RA should then tell residents that representatives from each wing will meet to discuss how common areas and facilities will be used. So the three steps of discussion will be:

   (1) Small groups discuss and come to agreement on the worksheet areas.
   (2) Spokespersons from the small groups meet, to come to consensus on guidelines for their wing or section.
   (3) A representative from each wing gets together with the RA to reach final agreement on the use of common (public) areas.

   *Note: Early in meeting Two the RA should reiterate the importance of the agreement -- that it is a means for residents to have a say in what goes on on their floor, and that it will be referred to throughout the year.

2,3. Divide the residents by wing, and then into groups of five or six. Have the groups choose a spokesperson. Make sure each resident has a copy of the worksheet/outline.

4. Tell the residents to use the worksheet as a guide in discussing all three types of guidelines (givens, negotiables, optional), and ask them to come to agreement on the "negotiable" and "optional" areas. Encourage them to look carefully at all items, and to speak out on their own suggestions and preferences, especially where the "other" items are listed. The spokesperson should be writing down all ideas from his/her group on the outline or on an additional sheet, if more space is needed.

*Note: The RA may want to set a reasonable time limit on the small group discussion (e.g. 45 minutes) -- but don't rush things, especially if the discussion seems productive.

5,6. Following the small group discussions, the RA will call together the spokespersons from the small groups of each wing (one wing at a time), to come to a consensus on the details of the worksheet -- to determine how the members of that wing will interact, treat the building facilities, etc. When consensus has been reached for each wing/section, residents from the wings will then choose a representative to meet with the RA to discuss (only) use of areas and facilities common to the entire unit.

*Note: In "huddles" with the spokespersons and representatives, the RA should take detailed notes on the ideas presented and the agreements reached by the residents; such notes will asssit the representatives in compiling the entire agreement later. The process should occur carefully and slowly; don't rush the residents thru this important step. Remember, the agreement will stand, with renegotiation from time to time, for the entire year. Again, make sure that the spokespersons and representatives understand what they are agreeing to, and the implications for their fellow residents.

7. When the spokespersons and representatives have reached consensus on the Unit Agreement, the RA should ask the representatives to write up the UA for their wing and the entire floor/unit. (This may be done on the same night as Meeting Two, or the next day, depending on time constraints). The final language of the UA should be clear, specific, and thorough.

8. All floor residents should see, read, and sign their names to the agreement, either in rough form, or after it is typed - as soon as possible after Meeting Two.

*Note: Obviously, for the Unit Agreement to be valid and accepted, a substantial number of unit members need to be in attendance at Meeting Two, and take active part in the discussions on the UA items. Each community should discuss contingency plans that address the following questions:

- What is an acceptable "quorum" of unit residents to draw up a UA?
- What should be done if the pre-determined quorum is not present at Meeting Two?
- What should be done if one or more residents refuse to sign agreeing to the UA drawn up by the floor?

These and other issues may be discussed, in community, during Unit Agreement training.

III. Post Agreement

After the agreement has been negotiated, signed, and a copy of it received by the residents the process is well underway, but not completed. As with any "constitution" or set of by-laws, provisions must be made to renegotiate and ammend the agreement. When the RA receives word that his/her residents wish to renegotiate part of the UA, he/she will probably want to work through the wing representatives or group spokespersons to do so, rather than calling together the entire floor. However, the unit members must be advised of (pending) changes, and have an opportunity to comment on them -- directly, or through a representative.

A. Assumptions

1. All unit residents have signed their names to the final copy of the agreement.

2. All unit residents have received a typed copy of the agreement for their wing/section, which includes guidelines on public area use.

3. A reasonably simple, open process for ammending the agreement has been worked out with unit members.

4. The RA has met with his/her RD and fellow RAs to discuss the agreements reached in their hall(s), and to plan for using the agreement throughout the year.

B. Process

1. The Unit Agreement is typed, and copies are made for each unit resident, plus extras for the RD and Community office.

2. The UA is distributed to residents as soon as possible, in any case no later than one week after Meeting Two.

3. The RA should keep a copy of the agreement and make it available to residents, as needed.

4. A copy of the agreement may be posted in a conspicuous place on the unit.

5. The RA should refer to the agreement, as appropriate, when confronting residents about undesirable behavior.

6. Language from the agreement may be included in warning letters, probation letters, and other communications.

7. The agreement should be renegotiated and ammended, as necessary.

8. Residents can be frequently reminded, by the RA and/or informal leaders, about the utility of the agreement, how it is working out, and where improvements (if any) need to be made.

C. Content (numbers correspond to "Process" steps)

1. Coordinate this step through the community office. Clear, neat copies run on a stencil will probably serve the purpose best.

2. The sooner the agreement copies reach the residents, the stronger the effect on the unit will be, and the greater the reinforcement residents receive for their efforts at Meetings One, Two and in between.

3,4. The RA should keep several copies of the UA, and post at least one on the hall bulletin board or other frequently-passed area. Although all residents received a copy of the UA, undoubtedly some will lose it. Also, copies should be made available and explained to new residents who come to the unit during the year.

5. The UA should be a "living document", used and referred to often, stressing that the "residents of this unit agreed to..." whenever unit members are confronted about their undesirable behavior.

6. Referring to the UA in letters and communications will bolster its validity in the eyes of residents. A warning letter, for example, which cites a violation of both residence hall rules and the Unit Agreement can be most effective and educational.

7. The UA agreed upon at the start of Fall semester may not serve the residents throughout the entire year. Some provisions will need to be ammended, especially of the unit experiences a large turnover between semesters. A process for ammending the UA should already have been agreed upon, and any changes should be made carefully, after all unit residents have been given the opportunity to offer their views.

8. Again, the more that the UA is mentioned and used, the more valid it will be to the residents.

You have probably concluded, after reviewing this "brief" paper that the Unit Agreement process is rather complex and lengthy - it is. However, it is hoped that by encouraging the discussion and drafting of "UAs" in all campus residence halls, on all units, life on those units will be a little more pleasant -- and we will have helped residents to take the responsibility for those positive changes. Our time spent in the fall, especially as "educators" and "facilitators" (as opposed to some of our less-enjoyable, traditional roles) will likely save us time and energy in the long run, and maybe even make our work as staff members a bit more enjoyable.

Student Employee Services Office July, 1981

APPENDIX A

- Unit Agreement letter
- Unit Agreement Worksheet
- Sample Unit Agreement

UNIT AGREEMENT

Fall, 1981

Introduction:

As a resident of you'll have a lot to say about what goes on in your unit. There is a set of rules which all residents must abide by (see your handbook), but most of the "fine points" of what goes on in your hall will be determined by you and your floormates.

While residents have always had a significant "say" about how their life in the halls would be, many did not realize it, or worse, let others (usually a small minority) have their say for them. Rather than running things in such a haphazard way, Resident Life staff are proposing that each unit or floor draw up an "Agreement" that specifies how the residents of that unit want their living environment to be.

In coming up with an "Agreement", you'll have the opportunity to discuss issues that are important to you, many which affect you daily, with the people who live around you. Issues like how the lounge is to be used, who cleans up after parties, phone use, how much noise is too much, and so on. It may seem a bit threatening or clumsy at first; talking with people you don't know well (like your floormates) may be tough, but the whole floor will be doing it at once, and besides - what better time to get to know your neighbors, and let them know about what you like and dislike, than the beginning of a new academic year?

Unit Agreements were drawn up on a limited basis in residence halls over the past year, and they've been instrumental in making life on those units a bit more pleasant, open, and friendly. We hope that you'll give it a try on your unit, and that having an "Agreement" will make your stay in the halls a good experience.

UNIT AGREEMENT
"Worksheet"

Take a few minutes to look over this worksheet in preparation for your next unit meeting. At that meeting you'll be discussing, in small groups, the guidelines that you and others on your unit will want to live by this year. There are three categories of guidelines for you to think about:

(1) "Givens": standard for all residents on campus; specified in the Residence Halls Agreement and the Residence Halls Handbook

(2) "Negotiables": important areas that all units are asked to discuss; may vary from one unit to another; should be agreed upon by a consensus of the residents of a floor/unit.

(3) "Optional": covers areas of group activities and events that you may want to discuss as a unit early in the year.

Please review these, and jot down your ideas and suggestions in the spaces provided. You'll notice that the language of the guidelines is rather specific, to alleviate any misunderstanding.

Agreement

"As residents of _____ (unit/hall) , we understand and agree to the following guidelines:

I. "Givens"

A. Safety & Security:

1. All fire/safety equipment (fire alarms, extinguishers, emergency exits, etc.) will be used properly, as necessary during emergencies. This equipment will not be abused.
2. Residents will lock their doors when leaving their rooms, even if they'll only be gone a short time.
3. Cooking of meals will be done in the kitchen areas only.

(your ideas):
4.
5.
6.

B. Condition of the Building/Sanitary Environment:

1. Residents will dispose of trash in proper receptacles.
2. Residents will not leave dishes and other personal articles in the bathroom sinks.
3. Lounge furniture will remain in the lounge, for all unit residents to use.

*Use back of page if need more space for your ideas

(your ideas):
4.
5.
6.

C. Resident Interaction:

1. Residents are encouraged to get to know the persons who live on their unit.
2. If one resident has a complaint against another, he/she will confront that resident directly but politely about the problem. If the resident who is confronted does not respond positively, the RA may be sought out for assistance.
3. Persons from different backgrounds will be living together on just about every unit; these persons will be treated with respect (like any other resident) and will not be harassed for their views or lifestyle.

(your ideas):
4.
5.
6.

D. Use of Public Space:

1. Any time a group or an individual wishes to use a lounge or rec. room, a Space Reservation form will be completed at least 5 days in advance and turned into the Community office.
2. Parties in the rec room must be sponsored by a floor. These parties are to be held on Friday or Saturday only, and must be over by 1:00 a.m.

(your ideas):
3.
4.
5.

II. "Negotiables" - Please agree, as a group, on one selection under each item.

A. Noise Level: The noise level on the unit will be low enough for people who wish to sleep or study in their rooms to do so.

(CHOOSE ONE)
1. 24 hours
2. 10 p.m. - 8 a.m.
3. Midnite - 7 a.m.
4. 10 p.m. - 10 a.m.
5. Other_____

(CHOOSE ONE)
1. 7 days a week
2. Sunday thru Wednesday
3. Sunday thru Thursday
4. Other_____

B. Unit Lounge*: The lounge can be used by unit members and their guests only, as:

(CHOOSE ONE)
1. A study lounge only
2. A study lounge when sleep/study hours are in effect; social lounge otherwise
3. Can be reserved by groups of residents, under these conditions: list conditions_____

_____

4. OTHER SPECIFICATIONS:

_____

_____

C. Hall Telephone Use Considerations:

(CHOOSE ALL THAT WILL APPLY)
1. Last person receiving a call will answer next call.
2. Message board will be maintained at the telephone.
3. Calls will be limited to _____ minutes.
4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

_____

_____

III. "Optional" - Here's where you can be especially creative; adopt the suggestions listed, or come up with your own.

A. Unity:

1. Each "worksheet group" will plan and carry out a unity-building activity for the rest of the wing during fall semester.
2. Residents will order floor/unit T-shirts
3. Residents will design and get approval on a hallway or lounge mural, to be painted by one or more unit residents

(your ideas):
4.
5.
6.

B. Sports:

1. The unit/wing will organize intramural teams in one or more of the following sports: (call Intramural Sports & Recreation for more information)

a. Volleyball	d. Golf	g. Badminton
b. Touch Football	e. Tennis	h. Cross Country
c. Swim Marathon	f. Soccer	i. Swimming & Diving

*Some units may not have a lounge and may need to negotiate with other units in their hall about use of the hall lounge, rec. room, or meeting room (where applicable).

2. The Unit Sports chairperson will be_____
3. Team captains will be chosen _____ (now/or later).

C. Activities and Programs:

1. Topics of Interest
   a. Hoff Theater movies
   b. Smithsonian - museums
   c. Places to eat on & around campus
   d. Unit parties
   e. Other:
   f Other:
   g. Other:
   h. Other:

2. Group member(s) interested in helping to plan and carry out the activity:

Name	Activity
a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	
f.	

D. Other Guidelines: (please add any other guidelines or suggestions for how you want your unit to be this year)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

IV. "Ammending the Agreement" - Over the course of the year, changes may need to be made in the agreement that your unit drew up in the fall. How do you propose such changes take effect:

(CHOOSE ONE)

1. By a two-thirds vote of the unit members (or members of a wing/section if the change only affects that wing/section).

2. By a simple majority vote of the unit (or wing/section members).

3. By a consensus of the small-group spokespersons from your wing/section.

4. By agreement of the representative(s) of your wing/unit.

5. Other:

*Note: When changes are made in the agreement all residents will be notified before the changes have been decided upon, so that they may give their views. Also, the RA will facilitate the meeting-discussion to ammend the agreement, but he/she will not "vote" on the change.

- After you have decided on the items listed in this Agreement, your group leader will meet with leaders of other groups on your wing to come up with guidelines for your wing or section. Then, a representative from each wing will meet to discuss use of the public areas on your Unit (e.g. lounge, kitchen, rec. room, etc.).

- You will be receiving a typed copy of the agreement within one week. If you have any questions when you get it, please direct them to your group leader, wing/section representative, or your RA.

Thanks for your time; and have a good year!

*This worksheet is a modification of the worksheet developed by Susan Kosempa, Beth Covert, and Pixie Angelo; which was used during Summer, 1981.

UNIT AGREEMENT

We, the residents of _____, agree to abide by the guidelines that we spelled out in the Unit Agreement drawn up on _____. Further, we agree to take major responsibility for enforcing the agreement, that is, we will confront fellow residents who have violated the guidelines, to let them know that what they've done is unacceptable to us. We will consult with our RA as needed, to help us enforce this agreement, and we will keep him/her appraised of any serious violations.

Unit Member Signatures Date

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
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Comments:

APPENDIX B

- Publicity Materials for Unit Agreements

Artwork: Drew Sweetak, Joe Krolak
Text: Johnetta Hill

*Copies of these materials may be ordered through the SES Office, or you may design your own.

UNIT AGREEMENTS...

...HUH?

U•NIT A•GREE•MENTS (YOO•NIT• ə•GRĒ•MənT)

-A social contract designed to foster an environment where residents can pursue academic goals and maintain social interactions in an appropriate balance; floor by-laws established by residents who have an opportunity to decide acceptable conditions for residing in the hall; those decisions made during the first weeks of the fall semester on each floor or unit.

UNIT

AGREEMENTS

»you decide«

Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

SENSATIONAL!

DYNAMIC!

STUPENDOUS!

IT'S THE ALL NEW

~ 1981 ~

UNIT AGREEMENT

COMING SOON

TO A RESIDENCE HALL NEAR YOU

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You Have An Opportunity To Decide

As You Think About Your Fall Housing Assignment,

we encourage you to give special thought to the positive living atmosphere that should prevail in your hall and on your floor next year. In the coming year, Resident Directors will lead processes that will allow opportunities for individual residents to suggest, debate and take part in establishing specific living standards. Some of the topic areas for these standards could be study or quiet hours, shared use of telephones, entertaining visitors, and relationships with housekeepers, for examples. There may be others you would want to add.

APPENDIX C

- Unit Agreement Staff Role Play training exercise

UNIT AGREEMENT STAFF ROLE PLAY

Purpose: To give the RA an opportunity to practice and receive feedback on implementing the unit agreement process on a floor. This exercise should take place as part of a community wide training session. It is assumed that the RAs have received general information about the unit agreement; have had the components of the unit agreement process explained to them by their RD; and are now ready to practice some of the finer points on implementing the agreement through a unit meeting.

General Process: This session is designed to take place as a model unit discussion. The general format will be as follows.

1) The Unit Agreement Implementation process will be practiced as three unit meetings: One as an introductory session to get floor members to talk about what they want their floor to be like, especially in regards to certain key living issues; one to negotiate the formal unit agreement; and a third to follow upon the formal agreement in illustrating how it can be used to deal with a floor problem.

2) In practicing these three meetings, the CD, ACD and RDs will act as facilitators. They will in each unit meeting, use the content and process materials and:

   - review the goals for the meeting
   - review some of the issues the RA might face in carrying out the meeting
   - conduct a sample meeting using 15 RAs as unit members and have the remaining staff process the meeting on the sheet provided
   - discuss the sample meeting gaining feedback from the RA and other staff
   - then, give a couple of RAs the opportunity to practice the meeting outline
   - this process should be repeated for the meeting to negotiate a formal agreement and for the meeting to follow-up on the agreement using it to solve a floor problem (in these practice meetings you may want to have some skilled returning RAs serve as the initial demonstrators).

NOTE: It is important to allow plenty of time for discussion of concrete issues (e.g. how to handle the wise guy) so that the RAs can vicariously anticipate and gain practice in some of the real issues in implementing the unit agreement. Use the staff present to brainstorm issues that might arise and how they might best be handled.

Secondly, it is important in your discussion to stress that how one plans one's various unit meetings will be affected by what each RA is trying to accomplish with the unit agreement process. What are the expectations for success of this RA with this unit? What is the level of detail he/she is seeking in the unit agreement of this unit? It is better for the RA to set limited goals for success and to surpass them then to lay on themselves a lot of unreasonable expectations and then fall short.